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SIPDIS

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SUBJECT: ZIMBABWE'S GROWING REGIONAL ENEMIES LIST

REF: (A) HARARE 743 (B) HARARE 726 (C) GABORONE 676

Classified By: Political Officer Win Dayton under Section 1.5 b/d

11. (SBU) SUMMARY: Soaked in anti-imperialist rhetoric and conspiracy theories, Zimbabwe's official press continues to view other nations exclusively through the prism of the ruling party's "with-us-or-against-us" framework. On the enemies list, the West has been joined by Botswana, Nigeria and, most recently, the SADC Parliamentary Forum, with Libya apparently next in line. A front page story May 4 warns of coming pressure on the GOZ from selected African nations at the behest of the United Kingdom. END SUMMARY.

Botswana Tops the List

12. (U) Since Gaborone distanced itself from SADC's public support for Zimbabwe on the margins of December's Commonwealth Heads of Government Meeting (CHOGM), it has found itself Zimbabwe's Public Enemy Number One in Africa. Recent transgressions spotlighted in lurid front page reports on Botswana include alleged targeting of Zimbabweans for floggings by Botswanan authorities, labor exploitation, the erection of border fences, and Botswanan support for VOA broadcasts (ref C). Information Minister Jonathan Moyo's confrontation with the Botswanan Ambassador over such issues was given prominent coverage and official editorials alternately portray the GOB as seduced, bullied, or bought out by Western interests.

Nigeria Running Second

13. (SBU) Nigeria has been a distant second to Botswana on the enemies list, more prominently featured but in less venomous terms. Election violence, opposition crackdowns, and Abuja's open door to Zimbabwe's white farmer class are favorite themes in news coverage here, and editorials since CHOGM have pilloried Obasanjo repeatedly. Most recently, an editorial in the Government-controlled Herald editorial on April 16 "condemned" Obasanjo's "grandstanding antics" in trying to attract Zimbabwe's white farmers, suggesting rather implausibly that were he an "impartial broker" on Zimbabwe he would have encouraged the farmers to remain in Zimbabwe to farm on "permissible" sizes of land. (Note: After having their entire farms and investments seized, the farmers were technically eligible to apply for new plots under land reform. End note.) A Harare-based Nigerian diplomat confirmed that Obasanjo had been incensed by the GOZ's intransigent posture during the run-up to CHOGM and had since been inclined to keep his distance from Zimbabwe's crisis.

Suspicious of Others

14. (SBU) Other African diplomats report that the GOZ monitors their governments' statements in the media and international fora religiously, calling in diplomats for a dressing down if such statements are deemed critical. In February, Mugabe blasted an unnamed "majority" of his African counterparts for succumbing to Western influence and turning against African revolutionary causes. The GOZ and the official press generally have remained cautiously respectful of the South African Government.

15. (U) The official press has reported Libya's rapprochement with the West in extremely negative terms, attributing it to neo-colonialist British pressure and Libyan economic desperation. The ruling party-affiliated Sunday Mirror asked in a May 2 editorial "Has Gaddafi sold his soul to the West?" and forecast that his relations with Mugabe "seem destined to become difficult." Until late last year, Mugabe counted Gaddafi as among his most prominent allies, and the official media trumpeted each of the frequent high level visits between Harare and Tripoli. Harare-based diplomats in contact with the Libyan mission here tell us that its access to the GOZ has been reduced markedly since Gaddafi shook hands with Tony Blair.

16. (U) Foreign-based media, especially from South Africa, continues to be a principal enemy of the state. The government press has given repeated play to Information Minister Jonathan Moyo's recent characterization of foreign correspondents and those who collaborated with them as "terrorists." A Herald editorial (often a precursor to government policy) last week cast those who contributed to the portrayal of Zimbabwe in a negative light as "traitors" and urged that they be prosecuted for treason, in absentia if necessary (ref B).

The "Un-African" SADC Parliamentary Forum

17. (U) In his weekly pseudonymous column in the Herald on May 1, Information Minister Jonathan Moyo blasted SADC-PF Election Norms and Standards as an "un-African, anti-African case of ventriloquial nonsense from the West, by the West, all to reluctant Africa." He suggested that the norms were forced on parliaments by "treacherous half-sons" and emphasized that they were invalid and non-binding.

British Plot Exposed

18. (U) In a front page feature on May 4, The Herald reported that the British Government was mounting a diplomatic campaign to engineer pressure on the GOZ through a series of high profile visits by regional leaders. According to the article, Zambian President Mwanawasa, Malawian President Muluzi, South African Mbeki and the Prime Minister of Mauritius were expected to visit, while former Kenyan leader Daniel arap Moi would come as a special envoy of Kenyan President Kibaki. The article closed with an assertion by an unnamed government spokesman that "there is peace and tranquility and the economic prospects are so good today that we do not believe any African country would want to spoil this for the benefit of the British."

Comment

19. (C) Ruling party exploitation of its monopoly over the country's daily media has become a central feature of GOZ foreign policy. As in so many other sectors, this means that policy is driven as much if not more by the insidious Information Minister than by cabinet members formally assigned relevant portfolios. The centrality of neo-colonialism and race to all media treatment of international relations is designed to fuel a siege mentality among domestic constituencies and to intimidate African neighbors into support for ZANU-PF. The "expose" on the alleged British plot appears intended to pre-empt any diplomatic or public pressure by Africans and foreshadows a shrill response -- by Moyo, at least -- to any such approaches.

110. (C) Moyo continues to be an influential wild card in factional struggles within the ruling party. Much of his effort lately appear geared against the camp of Speaker of the Parliament Emmerson Mnangagwa, who was Zimbabwe's signatory to the SADC-PF Electoral Norms and Standards. (For his part, the beleaguered Mnangagwa appears unlikely to stand up for the SADC-PF standards; ref A.) In the witch-hunt atmosphere engendered by Mugabe's anti-corruption campaign, Moyo remains one of the paralyzed party leadership's most confident operators. His relentless and single-minded attack mode, which appears to suit Mugabe for now, may come back to haunt him later, though, as he lacks a natural constituency and continues to accumulate enemies at home and abroad.

111. (C) Zimbabwe's relations with Libya had grown more distant even before Gaddafi's westward shift, more for economic than political reasons. Libya faced little prospect of meaningful returns on its \$360 million reported fuel deal with Zimbabwe's parastatal, to which it had cut off supplies for non-payment. Nonetheless, political relations until recently had remained close, at least in rhetorical terms, and Gaddafi's volte face presents a difficult challenge for the GOZ's indefatigable propaganda machine. Zimbabweans will likely follow Gaddafi's treatment by the West closely in two contexts: the impact it will have on Africanist Gaddafi's solidarity with erstwhile close ally Mugabe and, perhaps more significantly, as an indicator of how quickly an international pariah can rehabilitate relations with the West.

SULLIVAN